

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 EB-11 COME-00 LAB-06

SIL-01 TRSE-00 FCC-03 DRC-01 /174 W

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R 221043Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4231

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

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E.O.: 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJ: PRESIDENT POSTPONES CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

1. SUMMARY. BECAUSE OF DISSENTION WITHIN PARLIAMENT ON MIDDLE EAST AND SEVERAL DOMESTIC ISSUES, PRESIDENT POMPIDOU HAS POSTPONED JOINT SENATE/ASSEMBLY CONSIDERATION OF REDUCTION OF PRESIDENTIAL TERM FROM SEVEN TO FIVE YEARS. END SUMMARY.

2. AMENDMENT TO REDUCE PRESIDENTIAL TERM PASSED IN IDENTICAL TERMS BY BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT; ASSEMBLY VOTE WAS 270 IN FAVOR - 211 AGAINST SENATE BOTE WAS 162 IN FAVOR - 112 AGAINST. COMBINED VOTE FELL SHORT OF THREE-FIFTHS MAJORITY WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN NECESSARY TO APPROVE AMENDMENT AT JOINT MEETING AT VERSAILLES. (ASSUMING ALL WHO VOTED IN ASSEMBLY AND SENATE WOULD HAVE VOYED SAME WAY AT VERSAILLES, RESULT WOULD HAVE BEEN 432

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FAVORABLE WITH 453 NEEDED FOR THREE-FIFTSHS MAJORITY, THUS SHORT

FALL OF 21 VOTES.)

3. IN LIGHT OF UNCERTAIN OUTCOME AT VERSAILLES, PRESIDENT POMPIDOU POSTPONED JOINT CONGRESS WHICH HAD BEEN SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 23. HE NOW HAS THREE OPTIONS; (A) RESCHEDULE JOINT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION FOR ANY TIME BETWEEN NOW AND END OF CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY TERM (I.E., SPRING 1978); (B) SUBMIT ISSUE TO NATIONAL REFERENDUM; OR (C) WITHDRAW PROJECT ALTOGETHER. ONLY INDICATION SO FAR FROM ELYSEE IS THAT PRESIDENT WISHES ADDITIONAL TIME TO CONSIDER WHICH COURSE TO TAKE.

4. SPECULATION AMONG INFORMED SOURCES IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS THAT POMPIDOU RECOGNIZES THREE-FIFTHS MAJORITY SIMPLY NOT AVAILABLE IN CURRENT EMOTIONALLY CHARGED ATMOSPHERE. COMMUNISTS, SOCIALISTS AND INDEPENDENT LEFTISTS IN BOTH HOUSES UNANIMOUSLY VOTED AGAINST PROJECT, WITH GOVERNMENT COALITION VOTING ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY IN FAVOR. (COUVE DE MURVILLE AND TWO OTHER UDR DEPUTIES VOTED AGAINST, SEVEN OTHER GOVERNMENT COALITION DEPUTIES ABSTAINED.)

5. THUS, CENTRIST OPPOSITION DEPUTIES AND SENATORS WHO VOTED AGAINST IN BOTH HOUSES BY LARGE MARGINS, I.E., 25 OUT OF 34 REFORMERS IN ASSEMBLY AND 33 OUT OF 38 IN SENATE, HOLD THE KEY TO THREE-FIFTHS IN MAJORITY. SENATORS AND DEPUTIES IN THIS GROUP NORMALLY WOULD HAVE SUPPORTED AMENDMENT BUT VOTED AGAINST TO SHOW THEIR HOSTILITY TO GOF ME POLICY.

6. COMMENT: PRESIDENT POMPIDOU PROBABLY WISE NOT TO BRING CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE TO A HEAD AT THIS TIME. ME SITUATION AND PARTICULARLY FOREIGN MINISTER JOBERT'S DRY, POORLY DELIVERED, BUT AT THE SAME TIME CONDESCENDING DEFENSE OF GOF-ME POLICIES IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OCTOBER 17 (PARIS 27242) HAS CAUSED EXTREME DISPLEASURE AMONG CENTER OPPOSITION FORCES, AND AS REPORTED PARIS 26980, GOVERNMENT COALITION RANKS ALSO SPLIT ON ME. MOREOVER, DEPUTIES HAVE JUST COMPLETED BRUISING AND DIVISIVE DEBATE ON GOF BILL TO AID SHOPKEEPERS AND ARTISANS, THE SO-CALLED ROYER BILL (PARIS A-692). THE ROYER BILL WAS ADOPTED IN TUMULTUOUS SESSION OCTOBER 19 FOLLOWING DEMONSTRATIONS, BOMB LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THREATS AND OTHER HARRASSMENT AND PRESSURE FROM SHOPKEEPERS' ORGANIZATIONS. AT SAME TIME INTERNECINE QUARRELS WITHIN GOVERNMENT COALITION HAVE RECENTLY ERUPTED INTO ACRIMONIOUS PUBLIC DEBATE, E.G., OPPOSITION TO CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT OF TWO FORMER PRIME MINISTERS, COUVE DE MURVILLE AND MICHEL DEBRE (THE LATTER ABSTAINED IN THE VTE), AND QUARREL BETWEEN MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND DIRECTOR OF THE ORTF OVER ALLEGED POLITICAL PRESSURE ON FRENCH TV. GIVEN THIS

CHARGED ATMOSPHERE, PRESENT TIME IS DEFINITELY NOT PROPITIOUS  
TO TEST GOVERNMENT COALITION COHESIVENESS AND TO COURT CENTER  
OPPOSITION IN EFFORT TO FIND THREE-FIFTHS MAJORITY FOR CONSTITU-  
TIONAL CHANGE. OUR GUESS IS THAT PRESIDENT POMPIDOU WILL  
LET THE ISSUE LIE DORMANT FOR SEVERAL WEEKS OR PERHAPS MONTHS  
UNTIL INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION COOLS DOWN.  
IRWIN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
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